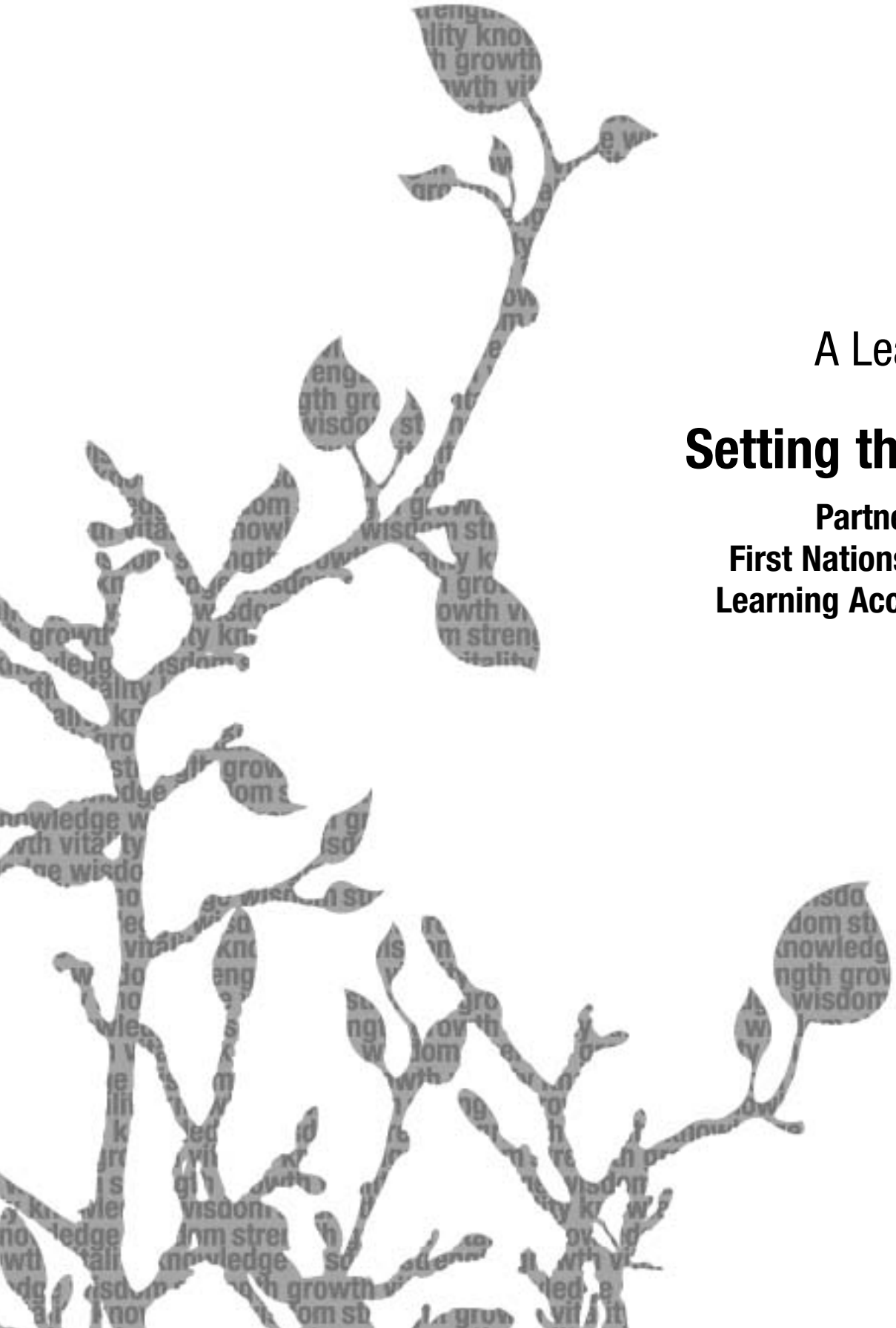

A Learning Alberta

Setting the Direction

Partnerships in Action: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning Access and Success

May 2006

A LEARNING ALBERTA

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The Aboriginal Subcommittee, as part of Alberta Advanced Education's A Learning Alberta dialogue with stakeholders, prepared this paper. The views and positions expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect those of Alberta Advanced Education.

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1. Executive Summary: Partnerships in Action - First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning Access and Success

As the focus on the importance of building a knowledge-based society and economy has sharpened over the past decade, the related issues of access to and success in advanced learning opportunities has grown in prominence. Educational attainment plays an important role, not only in improved labour market integration, employment prospects and earnings, but also in social and cultural health and prosperity of individuals.

Much of the past information available on First Nations, Métis and Inuit people's access to and success in advanced learning opportunities has focused primarily on the historic, social, economic and cultural barriers that exist. While a comprehensive understanding of the past and current issues underlying First Nations, Métis and Inuit people's barriers to academic success is critical to developing effective advanced learning initiatives and programs, it is equally important to take a forward-looking view of new possibilities within the full spectrum of advanced learning opportunities, including the trades, community adult learning initiatives and programs, and initiatives within Alberta's advanced learning institutions.

This is a view that recognizes and accepts the past while not relying on it as the sole defining characteristic of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and their histories, languages and cultures. Further, it is a position that seeks to build on respectful partnerships and relationships, not the differences, between First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and non-Aboriginal People that recognize the former as a dynamic and self-defining people with a shared ancestry and historical continuity – it is a position that forges us into partnerships towards a common vision: "An Alberta that leads the world in inspiring and supporting lifelong learning for all its peoples". It is in this perspective the policy actions have been steeped.

The policy actions presented below are the result of extensive dialogue with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, advanced learning providers, industry, learners and the public. It is also the result of the work of the Aboriginal Learning Subcommittee, struck as a result of the earlier dialogue with Albertans and stakeholder groups, to look specifically at developing recommendations that address First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning needs and supports. The sum total of the Subcommittee's work can be found on the pages following the Executive Summary, capturing the journey of the Subcommittee's discussions, deliberations and input.

1.1 Recommendations for Action

The Aboriginal Subcommittee supports and proposes the following policy actions and recommends First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, governments, learning providers, communities, industry and the public work together to implement these actions.

1.1.1 Building on Partnerships

Building on Partnerships: Founded on the principles of trust, openness, respect and quality, develop a partnership framework of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and the Government of Alberta with an aim to create more access and success within the full spectrum of advanced learning opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. The partnerships will focus more on establishing the best programs, with the best supports available in Alberta, than on jurisdictional differences and discussions.

Expand Alberta's Advanced Learning System to Include First Nations, Métis and Inuit Post-Secondary Institutions: By contributing 3,000 to the 60,000 advanced learning spaces by 2020 in partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups, expand the Alberta advanced learning system to include First Nations, Métis and Inuit Colleges as a recognized and integral part of that system. Changes to the current and the development of new mechanisms (e.g. funding, statutes, regulations, policies and practices, etc.) will be adopted to ensure the inclusion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Colleges into Alberta's advanced learning system.

Building on Partnerships and Capacity in Leadership and Governance in the Advanced Learning System: In partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups, learning providers, Alberta communities and the Government of Alberta, develop initiatives and strategies that ensure that First Nations, Métis and Inuit people aspire to, participate and succeed in key decision-making positions and governance structures that make up the advanced learning system, including the government, learning providers (e.g. Board of Governors) and communities (e.g. Community Adult Learning Councils). This includes:

- Creating a strategic-level position or area within the Department of Advanced Education whose mandate and authority is to ensure First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner, system and resource specific solutions and strategies are implemented within the advanced learning system, institutions and government organizations. This position or area will develop its solutions and strategies based on input and recommendations from an Advisory Body, consisting of representation from First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups.
- Challenging current models of decision-making, funding and programming intended to improve First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning access and success in advanced learning opportunities.
- Developing initiatives, including leadership development programs, from existing First Nations, Métis and Inuit people's governance and decision-making models and traditions.

1.1.2 Inspiring Learners

Measure First Nations, Métis and Inuit Access and Success in Advanced Learning: Develop, implement and report on measures that track First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner access and success in advanced learning opportunities, including:

- K-12 and advanced learning participation and attainment rates
- Graduate employment rates and income levels
- Learner and graduate satisfaction rates
- Number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit based schools and institutions
- Number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people on boards and other leadership roles in the advanced learning system.

Public Awareness Campaign: In partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups, develop a targeted awareness campaign to current and potential First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners that both promotes the intrinsic values of participating in learning endeavours and informs these learners about the range of available learning options and related resources to gain access to and succeed in those opportunities.

Preparation for Advanced Learning and Labour Market Opportunities: In partnership with Alberta Education and Alberta Human Resources and Employment, take steps to ensure that First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth are well prepared for advanced learning and the workforce. Comprehensive information must be available and life-skills training must be taught to current and future First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners to ensure that they are well-informed about and prepared for the range of career and work opportunities. This must start with learners in the earlier grades. Because of their wealth of experience, elders must play a significant role in this process. In addition, current Alberta Advanced Education mentorship and ambassador programs will be employed as examples of mechanisms to distribute the learning and job preparation information.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Apprenticeship and Industry Training: Continue supporting programs and initiatives that focus on First Nations, Métis and Inuit people participation and completion of apprenticeship and industry training programs that respond to both province-wide and local community labour market needs.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learner Support Services: In partnership with First Nation, Métis and Inuit stakeholders, develop First Nations, Métis and Inuit-specific learner support services at advanced learning institutions with an aim to coordinate existing institution program and service initiatives, stimulate new initiatives, provide support services for current and past learners, introduce an elder presence at the institution and serve as a liaison between the university and First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

Learner Transitions: In partnership with First Nation, Métis and Inuit stakeholders and in consideration of the often non-linear path taken by many learners to complete advanced learning studies and to ensure their success in such learning opportunities, develop adaptive and flexible learner transition programs that recognize past learning and ensures smooth transition to the next stage of learning (e.g. "bundled" learning).

Infrastructure Support for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning: To ensure learning opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners take place in a safe, secure and meaningful way, provide for strategic investments in human and capital (e.g. libraries, mobile programs, mentorship programs, computers for schools, internet support, etc.) infrastructures in First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning communities.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Teachers: In partnership with First Nation, Métis and Inuit stakeholders and Alberta Education, establish a range of strategies and appropriate incentives to encourage more First Nations, Métis and Inuit people to become teachers in all subject areas, especially in math and sciences.

1.1.3 Culture and Language Preservation and Development

Provincial Centre of Excellence in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education: In partnership with the First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups, establish a provincial centre of excellence, for use by all Alberta communities, designed specifically to address issues in and promote awareness of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning, culture and language that could leverage knowledge, experience and wisdom from existing programs and initiatives and provide an invaluable focus for research, innovation and sharing of best practices. It could become a resource for First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators, for researchers and for schools seeking advice and support in the best ways of meeting the needs of their First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners. It could explore and provide linkages to research and initiatives related to a wide range of social issues that affect First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners' success at school including adequate housing, good nutrition, strong community supports, wisdom and spirituality. And it could provide an opportunity to learn from elders about traditional ways of teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth.

Faculties of Indigenous Studies: In partnership with institutions and First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholders, develop faculties of Indigenous studies at Alberta institutions. One model to consider in the development of these faculties is the University of Alberta's Faculté Saint-Jean, which as a "community within a community", could support spiritual, cultural and learning opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners.

Community-Based Instruction: In partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, create more learning opportunities available directly in the learners' home communities by leveraging existing infrastructures (e.g. distance learning, brokering, etc.) with new models and approaches.

Indigenous Curriculum Development: In partnership with First Nation, Métis and Inuit stakeholders, develop a range of strategies that ensures that teacher preparation and the development of curriculum and learning resources are based on and integrates First Nations, Métis and Inuit people culture, language and indigenous principles of curriculum development. Focus particularly on the curriculum and learning resources for programs that prepare learners to work in the communities, including: medicine and wellness, law, business and economic development and language and culture.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Family Literacy Initiative: In partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people stakeholder groups and community-based literacy groups, develop a First Nations, Métis and Inuit family literacy initiative that combines a focus on First Nations, Métis and Inuit language and culture with other literacy initiatives.

1.1.4 Funding

Funding Supports: Provide for the necessary and on-going funding supports to accomplish all the policy actions recommended in this policy document.

2 Context and Background

2.1 A Learning Alberta – Transforming the Advanced Learning System

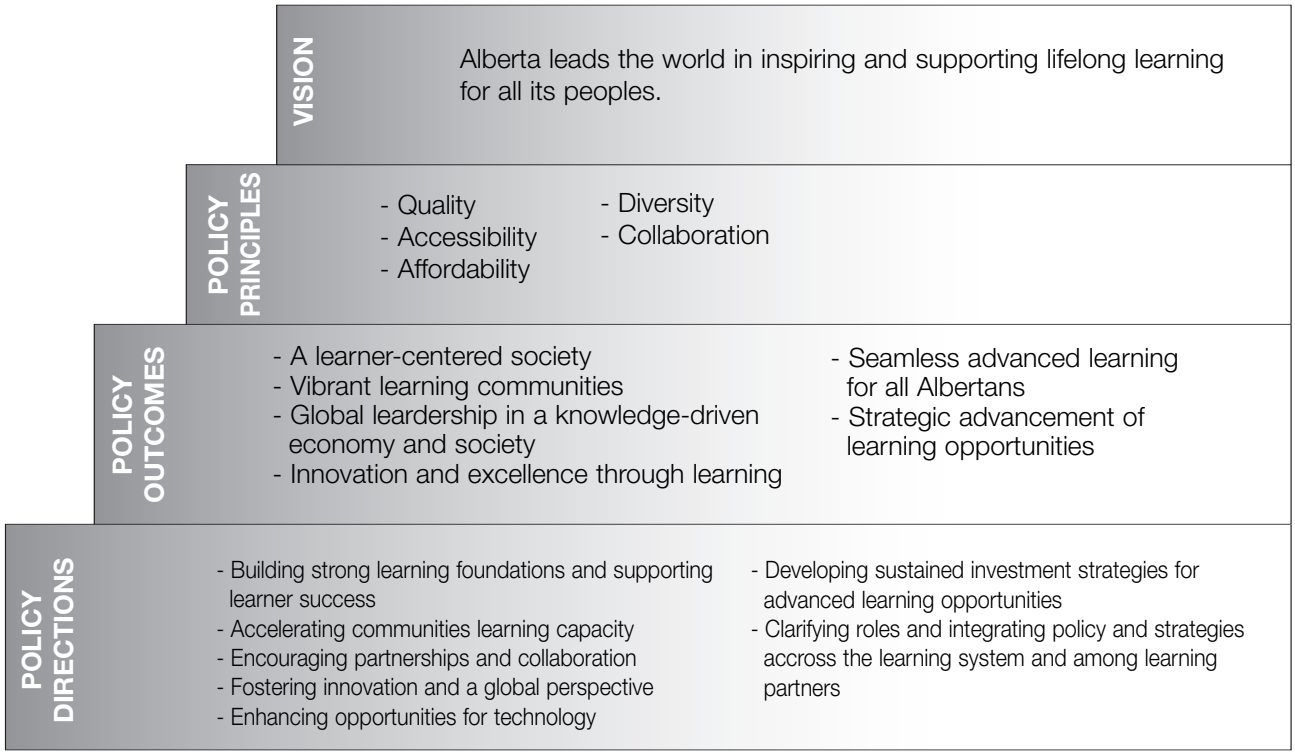
In early 2005, Premier Klein announced government's intention to make access to affordable and high quality advanced education opportunities its top priority. Within this context, Alberta's Advanced Education Minister initiated a comprehensive dialogue with Albertans about the province's advanced education system, the *A Learning Alberta*.

The review began with roundtable discussions held early in 2005. The

Minister asked representatives from a wide range of learning backgrounds to serve on a Steering Committee; their mandate was to identify a new vision and policy framework for Alberta's advanced education system. The Steering Committee built upon the roundtable discussions by holding a series of consultations where stakeholders:

- provided written submissions to key issues raised in a series of discussion documents;
- participated in discussions on funding and Alberta's current Tuition Fee Policy;
- attended regional meetings held throughout the province; and
- provided feedback through an online survey.

Based on feedback from these consultations, the Steering Committee developed a draft policy framework to support further discussions. The consultations culminated in a Minister's Forum held on November 1 and 2, 2005, where over 250 Albertans reflected on the Steering Committee's draft framework and discussed actions and strategies needed to achieve these goals. The revised framework presented below is based on feedback from the Minister's Forum and is intended to provide direction for policies and programs on the full breadth of the advanced education system.



In his closing remarks at the November forum, the Minister announced the creation of three sub-committees to maintain the momentum of the *A Learning Alberta*. These sub-committees were tasked with developing action plans in the areas of Foundational Learning and Diversity, Support for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning and Transforming the Advanced Learning System.

In its Terms of Reference, the Aboriginal Learning subcommittee stated that it will develop policy recommendations that support transformation of the system. Specifically, the recommendations will focus on:

- Opportunities to address gaps in the networks and pathways serving the learning needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.
- Ways to overcome jurisdictional challenges that create barriers for First - Nations, Métis and Inuit learners.
- The role of First Nations, Métis and Inuit colleges within the advanced learning system in providing access to advanced learning opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners.
- Ways to better reflect First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning cultures and models in teaching materials and pedagogies.
- Solutions to gaps in information about the advanced learning system and ways of sharing this information more effectively with First Nation, Métis and Inuit people.

This draft policy paper for Supporting First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning has been developed with input received from the Aboriginal Learning Subcommittee, First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholders at the regional consultation sessions throughout Alberta as well as Albertans through the *A Learning Alberta* process.

The paper begins with an overview of the policy context of *A Learning Alberta* and First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning opportunities and challenges. This is followed by a discussion of current initiatives and general themes in best practices that strengthen First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning. The paper concludes with the recommended policy outcomes and actions that support the vision and policy direction from *A Learning Alberta* and advance the perspectives and direction provided by the Aboriginal Learning subcommittee members to support learning access and success of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners.

2.2 Policy Context

There has been a substantial policy shift within Alberta over the last decade. In the mid-1990s, Albertans were concerned with operating deficits and accumulated debt and supported a policy direction aimed at addressing these issues. While deficit and debt elimination are no longer a driving consideration behind government policy direction, there are many other opportunities and challenges on the horizon. An increasingly integrated and competitive global economy; the need to secure a high quality of life and social well-being for all Albertans; and the emergence of knowledge-based economies where ideas, creativity and people are the foundation for future prosperity have all created new opportunities and pressures for Alberta.

It is increasingly recognized that people are the shaping force in the new economy and it is people with their ideas, knowledge, skills and attitudes that will secure our future well-being and position Alberta to compete successfully within a global context. Consequently, support to increase Alberta's people capacity is an important consideration for government and the broader advanced education system. Effective policy direction and solutions aimed at engaging and supporting First Nations, Métis and Inuit people to reduce the barriers to gain improved access to post-secondary learning opportunities, the economy and society will play a pivotal role achieving these broad policy objectives.

In response to the above pressures as well as other provincial challenges, the Alberta government unveiled its strategic plan Today's Opportunities, Tomorrow's Promise in March 2004. This plan lays out a course for the province over the next 20 years and identifies a vision and opportunities to help the province maximize its potential. These opportunities are grouped under the following pillars:

- Unleashing Innovation;
- Leading in Learning;
- Competing in a Global Marketplace; and
- Making Alberta the Best Place to Live, Work and Visit.

Alberta's advanced education system will play a fundamental role supporting the Leading in Learning and Unleashing Innovation pillars. As substantial players within Alberta's research and development sector, the province's post-secondary institutions are ready to meet the strategic plan's call to enhance technology development and commercialization. Similarly, Alberta's wide range of advanced education providers play a critical role in providing the learning opportunities that advance careers, address skills shortages and enable Albertans to lead enriching and fulfilling lives.

The *A Learning Alberta* process clarified that Albertans understand and view advanced education funding as an investment in both future economic prosperity and social wellness and that Albertans support the perspective that government's economic and social policy should be filtered through this integrated lens. Additionally, Albertans stated that the traditional focus of advanced education as the path to income and employment opportunities should be expanded to recognize the social benefits experienced by having a learning society. Albertans noted that we need to focus on the long-term development of our human capacity, rather than the short-term needs of the market.

The *A Learning Alberta* also expands upon the direction contained in the Alberta Government's strategic plan. It recognizes that in order to maximize opportunities for Albertans to reach their full potential, the advanced education system must operate within a collaborative framework that expands learning opportunities in rural areas, focuses on communities and reaches out to underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.

However, expanding access will require more than creation of new spaces in advanced education institutions. It will require a higher degree of awareness among Albertans of the diverse range of learning opportunities available, as well as the costs and benefits of these alternatives. It will require learners be provided with timely and accurate information and guidance that allows them to make appropriate choices about their education. Further, it will require increased learner supports and in particular increased financial supports to ensure entry barriers are overcome, a wide diversity of learners are adequately supported through their studies and that affordability is recognized beyond graduation during loan repayment.

2.3 Opportunities and Challenges in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning

As the focus on the importance of building a knowledge-based society and economy has sharpened over the past decade, the related issues of access to and success in advanced learning opportunities has grown in prominence. Educational attainment plays an important role, not only in improved labour market integration, employment prospects and earnings, but also in social and cultural health and prosperity of individuals.

Much of the past research and information presented on First Nations, Métis and Inuit people's access to and success in advanced learning opportunities has focused primarily on the historic, social, economic and cultural barriers that exist. Recent examples of this information can be found in:

- Aboriginal Peoples and Post-Secondary Education: What Educators Have Learned. Prepared for the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, by R.A. Malatest, January 2004.
- Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Post-secondary Enrolment Rates. Prepared for The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) by R.A. Malatest, May 2002.
- Alberta Commission on Learning: Turning vision into reality Improve education outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth, Alberta Learning, October 2003.

- Fundamentals of Adult Education: Adult Education in First Nations Communities: Starting with people (Chapter 18) by Deo Poonwassie, University of Manitoba, March 2001.

While a comprehensive understanding of the past and current issues underlying First Nations, Métis and Inuit people barriers to academic success is critical to developing effective advanced learning initiatives and programs, it is equally important to take a forwarding-looking view of new possibilities. This is a view that recognizes and accepts the past while not relying on it as the sole defining characteristic of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and their history, language and culture. Further, it is a view that seeks to build on respectful relationships, not the differences, between First Nations, Métis and Inuit and non-Aboriginal people that recognize First Nations, Métis and Inuit people as dynamic and self-defining people with a shared ancestry and historical continuity. It is with this perspective that the policy outcomes and actions recommended in this paper have been considered and developed.

2.4 General Themes in Best Practices in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning

A number of perspectives on First Nations, Métis and Inuit advanced learning programming exist. One such perspective, while it does not describe the full range of First Nations, Métis and Inuit initiatives that are within and part of advanced learning institutions, was put forth at, the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), which "classified post-secondary programs according to the degree of control Aboriginal Peoples have over the education offered [using] four categories to describe such programs: assimilative, integrative, affiliated and independent" (Holmes, 2005).

- The **assimilative** model is one where learners fit into fixed "colonial" programming.
- The **integrative** model "recognizes Aboriginal learners as a distinct group" and "adapts the institution" to serve their needs. There are many examples of this in BC – some successful, some not. The Malaspina University College's First Nations Studies program is a model of a successful Aboriginal program that is experiencing supportive exponential growth. (Atleo, Learning Quarterly Spring 1999). The Squamish Nation and Capilano College (Wright, 1998) are also cited.
- The **affiliated** model is one where an institution is under Aboriginal control but affiliated with another institution, often for accreditation purposes. Examples of affiliated Aboriginal institutions are the Institute of Indigenous Governance (IIG) and the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, which both operate within the framework of provincial legislation. At the national level, a long-standing example in Canada is the First Nations University of Canada in Saskatchewan (formerly Saskatchewan Indian Federated College).
- The fourth category, the **independent** post-secondary institution, is under Aboriginal control. Examples in BC include the Native Education Centre and Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a. Holmes suggests that independent Aboriginal institutions are often not accredited and are financially challenged. Also, there is not always agreement on the concept of "independence." For example, even though it was created under provincial legislation, the Institute of Indigenous Government[1] with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs would contend that it is independent and Aboriginal-controlled (Perra, 2003).

According to Malatest (2002), the single most fundamental requirement for successful Aboriginal post-secondary education strategies is for government and the public to have "an understanding of Aboriginal Peoples." This includes a true understanding of the historic and social factors in which Aboriginal Peoples live in order to appreciate not only the challenges faced but, more importantly, their value-based viewpoint. These view-points need to be understood and reflected in post-secondary education. A larger strategy is required that approaches Aboriginal post-secondary education beyond a "recruitment and retention" issue or problem.

While there have been improvements over the last decade, research reveals that to a large extent changes are limited to "special" post-secondary programs and a small number of Aboriginal communities that have established post-secondary education institutions in partnership with universities or colleges.

Malatest (2002) summarizes several other significant challenges in Aboriginal post-secondary learning. Included are some of those challenges:

- Lack of funding and financial support for growing affiliated independent Aboriginal educational institutions;
- Lack of specific funding for Métis, non-Status and Bill C-31 persons who are not eligible for funding;
- Specific support services for key learner groups are a challenge, particularly women (high numbers), men (low numbers) and mature learners (high numbers);
- Lack of Aboriginal instructors and staff;
- Lack of diversification of subjects at the post-secondary level; and,
- Lack of community support at the community level to address cultural and social barriers, including treatment and awareness of chemical/alcohol dependencies.

The Assembly of First Nations noted in 2003 the following critical success factors of a quality Aboriginal education:

- Role of Elders in the process;
- The encouraging of pride and identity;
- Aboriginal values;
- Belief and philosophy in education;
- Holistic approach;
- Obeying natural laws;
- Qualified and caring teachers and teachings;
- Feeling a sense of growth through culture and language;
- Feeling good about themselves and their families;

- Culturally appropriate curriculum;
- Balance between the multiple Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal world views;
- Programs that reflect traditions and values; and,
- The hiring and recruitment of Aboriginal educators with various teaching methodologies and respect for different ways of learning.

To date, a large number of programs, services, initiatives and approaches have been contemplated or developed with an aim to improving Aboriginal participation in and attainment of advanced learning opportunities. Both section 2 and Appendix A provide a summary of both aboriginal-focused initiatives currently underway in Alberta Advanced Education and an inventory of best practices and solutions in other jurisdictions. These two documents provided the foundation for further contemplation and discussion among subcommittee members to assist in the development of the policy recommendations presented in this paper.

2.5 Current Initiatives to Strengthen First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning

In recent years, a number of initiatives have been considered to help strengthen First Nations, Métis and Inuit people learning within the advanced learning system context. The following is a summary of Aboriginal-focused initiatives currently underway in Alberta Advanced Education. It is important to consider the investments and mechanisms that have recently been introduced and are available to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning policy directions and actions. The Aboriginal Subcommittee considered these initiatives in their deliberations to develop and advance its policy recommendations.

2.5.1 Adult Learning Initiatives

Learning Clicks - Aboriginal Component

Learning Clicks is an interactive, dynamic and informative multimedia tool to assist Grade 9 -12 learners with planning for post-secondary studies. The Learning Clicks Web site and corresponding CD-ROM are designed to inform learners about the importance and long-term benefits of post-secondary education and to serve as a portal to provide learners with the necessary information to assist in planning for post-secondary studies.

- The Aboriginal Component to the Learning Clicks CD-ROM is intended to increase awareness among Aboriginal learners (Grade 6 to 12) about post-secondary learning options and motivate them to plan and pursue post-secondary studies.
- This initiative will develop an approach to enable Aboriginal learners to maintain their cultural beliefs and traditions, while still finding their place in Alberta's post-secondary institutions. In addition, a key component in the Learning Click's success is increased band, school and parental involvement in encouraging Aboriginal learners to pursue post-secondary education.
- Next steps in the project will include the development of:
    - A multimedia tool (website) to use in conjunction with existing Learning Clicks CD Rom.
    - Information in print form for communities that are restricted in technology/internet access.

- Materials and guidelines of best practices for Aboriginal Youth Ambassadors.

Parent-Child Literacy Strategy

This strategy began in 2001 to provide intergenerational early language and literacy programs to socially and economically disadvantaged families with children under the age of six. The goals of the strategy are:

- To enhance the oral language, early literacy and social interaction skills of children aged 0-6 so that they are better able to achieve success at home, school and the community
- To strengthen and build the basic literacy skills of parents/caregivers.
- To support and foster the involvement of parents/caregivers in their children's learning
- To develop and enhance community-based partnerships that support the development of language and literacy skills of families.

In 2003-04, 6,975 parents (or other adult caregivers such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings) and 7,457 children aged 0-6 from socially and economically disadvantaged families participated in early language and literacy programs.

Aboriginal Family Literacy

- Under available funding, through a non-competitive process, eligible Aboriginal organizations and communities may submit funding requests for up to $40,000 per year for up to three years at one time. Eligible organizations are those with demonstrated community capacity to plan, develop, deliver and evaluate a quality programming in their community and a strong demonstrated interest in family literacy.
- To date, five family literacy projects have been established with Aboriginal organizations and communities in Alberta and four additional projects are currently being developed. The focus is inter-generational programs that stimulate oral language and emergent literacy in first languages. Projects to date include:
  - Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement;
  - Lac La Biche Regional Awasisak & Family Development Circle Association;
  - Red Road Healing Society;
  - Peavine Métis Settlement; and
  - Ben Calf Robe Society.

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT)
ACAT has recently met with the three aboriginal colleges in the transfer system - Blue Quills First Nations College, Maskwachees Cultural College and Yellowhead Tribal College - to discuss the challenges and barriers experienced by aboriginal learners.

One outcome of these meetings is to develop mechanisms to resolve issues in specific subject areas, including Cree and Native Studies. Colleges are also being encouraged to increase their profile in the Alberta Transfer Guide by formalizing the transfer agreements between the three institutions.

Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs
Alberta Advanced Education supports two Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs through the Access Growth Fund. In 2005-2006 over 90 learners will be registered in the programs, with the majority in the 3rd and 4th years of their studies.

The Niitsitapi Aboriginal Teacher Education
This University of Lethbridge program (offered in collaboration with Red Crow Community College) began in fall of 2003 with 12 learners admitted to the regular on-campus degree program. A second cohort of 24 learners was admitted in the fall of 2004 to a specialized, culturally sensitive Blackfoot teacher education program. Before admission, learners must have completed 30 courses of university level study and demonstrate knowledge of Blackfoot language and culture. In 2005-2006, it is anticipated that a total of 46 learners will be participating in the Niitsitapi program.

The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP)
This University of Alberta program began in 2002. ATEP is an off-campus elementary teacher education program designed to improve the educational success of Aboriginal children by increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers in communities in northern Alberta. Progress to date includes:

- Convocation 2004 - 33 learners graduate from the first two cohorts offered at Blue Quills First Nation College and Northern Lakes College.
- In September 2003, one cohort of 22 learners began studies in a full 4-year community-based program in collaboration with Northern Lakes College in Grouard, Slave Lake, Wabasca, Peace River and Ft. Vermilion.

A total of 47 learners (registrations to be finalized) are registered in the ATEP program for 2005-2006, including 24 learners in the community-based program at Northern Lakes College. A new cohort of 23 learners in year 3 and 4 degree completion are registered at Maskwachees Cultural College in Hobbema.

Increasing Access to Post-Secondary Learning Opportunities

Alberta Advanced Education's efforts to increase First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner access to post-secondary and other adult education and training opportunities and support services include some of the following activities:

- Support for transition programs between post-secondary institutions, (e.g. Northern Lakes College, NorQuest College and Keyano College with the University of Alberta) aimed at increasing Aboriginal access and success in certificate, diploma and degree programs.
- Support to Alberta-North is a partnership of institutions that share goals of increasing and improving access to educational opportunities and services and improving the success rate of adult learners in northern Alberta. Founded in 1994, Alberta-North maintains a network of 49 Community Access Points (CAPs) in northern Alberta, in partnership with Aurora College, Northwest Territories, which hosts 26 CAP sites. These CAP sites allow over 1,700 registrants per year in small and isolated communities across Northern Alberta to receive courses, programs and educational services by providing access to a facility, educational technology and a telecommunications network. A significant number of learners are Aboriginal.
- Since 1999, Alberta Advanced Education has, through the Access Fund, supported the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary in offering a Bachelor of Social Work degree program through the Learning Circles Route to learners in rural, remote and/or Aboriginal communities across Alberta. The Learning Circles curriculum incorporates traditional philosophies and knowledge systems with cultural and geographic relevance that is sensitive to First Nations and Métis people with convenient scheduling of courses in local sites and local practicum placements. The program will be made available through distance delivery commencing fall 2005.
- Implementation of literacy initiatives - 22 Aboriginals were trained to facilitate Aboriginal Literacy and Parenting Skills (A-LAPS) programs. Aboriginal-culturally appropriate family literacy learning resources were developed and provided to 150 home visitor volunteers. Implementation of four Aboriginal family literacy programs began in 2004.
- Scholarships and Bursaries – The ministry administers several awards of specific interest to Aboriginal Peoples through the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund Endowment Program.

- NAIT's Aboriginal Educational Success Initiative is a multi-faceted approach designed to attract, retain and provide meaningful learning, career and employment opportunities for Aboriginal learners, both at NAIT campuses and in communities throughout Northern Alberta. One of the activities to be supported is a Distance Delivery Program featuring a mobile science laboratory, "Science in a Box" that can be moved from community to community to provide a full laboratory experience.

Building Effective Working Relationships that Will Contribute to Quality Learning Opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners

Alberta Advanced Education and Alberta Education are building on the relationships established during the Native Education Policy Review (NEPR) and continue to dialogue with Aboriginal communities and education stakeholders. The external Advisory Committee members that helped guide the NEPR continue to provide advice and guidance in the on-going implementation of the FNMI Education Policy Framework.

Creating a Mechanism through a Consultative Processes to Measure First Nation, Métis and Inuit Learner Success

Alberta Advanced Education and Alberta Education have undertaken an Aboriginal Learner Data Collection Initiative. As of September 2004, a voluntary Aboriginal ancestry question was included on registration forms in the K-12 and post-secondary systems. This will allow the two departments to collect and compile information for the measurement of system effectiveness and programs/services.

2.5.2 Apprenticeship and Industry Training Initiatives

Scholarships

- The Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Scholarships provided approximately 165 annual scholarships of $1,000 each to recognize the excellence of Alberta apprentices in a trade and trainees in a designated occupation and to encourage recipients to complete their apprenticeship or occupational training programs.
- In 2005, there were 12 scholarships awarded to self-identified Aboriginal apprentices. Eight of the 12 scholarships were specifically designated for Aboriginal apprentices.

Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP)

- The Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) provides opportunities for high school youth to begin their apprenticeship program in Grade 10. The youth are paid by the employer during their on-the-job training while they earn high school credits. Once the youth have graduated from high school, they are eligible to enter the first-year of their apprenticeship technical training program. Many learners often obtain full-time employment with the training employer.
- There are currently 22 self-identified Aboriginal RAP apprentices in high school. An additional 56 Aboriginal apprentices who started in the RAP have continued on to a regular apprenticeship program after high school.

Youth Apprenticeship Project

- The Youth Apprenticeship Project (YAP) is a pilot project in Northern Alberta that helps learners from Grade 7 to 12 explore career options through applied learning activities. YAP is beginning its second year of implementation as a pilot project in four northern Alberta schools.
- The YAP assists learners to see the need and value of staying in school and earning a high school credential and in making connections between core academic subjects and the world of work.
- During the first year of implementation of the pilot, a total of 240 learners from five participating schools were involved in the project. The participating schools included: Dr. Swift Middle School (Lac La Biche), Prairie River School (High Prairie), Grouard School (Grouard), Bigstone Community School and Mistassiniy School (Wabasca-Desmarais).
- 100 YAP learners participated in the 2005 Skills Canada Alberta Competition in the YAP Jobsite Safety Competition.
- The assessment of the first-year implementation of the YAP pilot indicated that:
    - Integrating academic and hands-on opportunities in career development generally enhanced learner attendance, reduced learner tardiness and enhanced learners' overall achievement levels.
    - Feedback from YAP learners, their parents and other learning stakeholders indicated that learner learning was made more interesting and meaningful when learning was related to the world of work.
    - Learners' interest in the YAP also increased after the success achieved at the YAP Jobsite Safety Competition at the Skills Canada Alberta Competitions.

Aboriginal Communication Strategy

In July 2001, the former ministry of Alberta Learning identified the need for a strategic communication plan to provide an awareness of career opportunities in the trades to Alberta Aboriginal Peoples and thereby help increase Aboriginal Peoples' participation in the trades. Following research with target audiences, client input and discussion with Elders, communication strategy recommendations were developed. Many of the completed materials can be downloaded from www.tradesecrets.org.

- Aboriginal role models were recruited and materials produced to assist them to conduct presentations in their communities.
- A guide “Step into the Trades” was developed for junior and senior high school learners.
- An information guide for School Counsellors and Educators was distributed to schools in the province, to assist Counsellors and Liaison Workers provide quality information about trades to junior and senior high school learners.
- Parents of children in Kindergarten to Grade 6 were provided with a one page fact sheet explaining the benefits of apprenticeship training.
- The Step into the Trades Colouring and Activity Book was developed for children in Kindergarten to Grade 4. The pictures to be coloured are of tradespeople working; the activities illustrate work in the trades.
- The Step into the Trades Playing Cards was distributed to Grades 2 to 4 and to some junior high schools. The playing cards have colourful illustrations and short descriptions of each of the trades. A simple game reinforces the names of the trades and trade categories.
- For Grades 7 to 9 learners, the Step into the Trades – Finding Your Career Path comic book was designed. The comic book depicts the journey of Aboriginal learners as they determine their career direction, research the trades and begin their apprenticeship programs. The comic book reinforces apprenticeship training as post-secondary education that can lead to great careers with excellent earning potential.
- Two Aboriginal Youth Ambassadors (one in the North Region, one in the South Region) work to develop, schedule and deliver marketing and promotional presentations to junior and senior high school learners, parents, Aboriginal groups, career counselors and other stakeholders.
- The Step into the Trades Web Resource will be developed and hosted on www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca. The project is an interactive and fun way to learn more about the trades and to make the trades appealing to young people. It will include text information and descriptions of trades as well as interactive games, such as trivia.
- A brochure for employers about the benefits of hiring Aboriginal apprentices is being developed.
- Articles highlighting successful Aboriginal apprentices are being developed.

Aboriginal Workforce Essential Skills

- Alberta Advanced Education, in collaboration with other stakeholders, has developed an Essential Skills program to address the needs of Aboriginal Peoples who would like to participate in apprenticeship programs, but lack the necessary workplace skills. In the Apprenticeship Preparation for Aboriginal Peoples project, Aboriginal learners will learn the workplace essential skills, knowledge and strategies to enter and succeed in an apprenticeship program through an applied learning curriculum that will focus on literacy, numeracy, science and work maintenance skills.
- The first pilot of the project is expected to be delivered in 2006.

Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project (AAAP)

- Alberta Advanced Education provides support to the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project (AAAP), a joint venture initiative between industry, Aboriginal representatives and the Federal Government designed to increase Aboriginal Peoples’ participation in Alberta apprenticeship programs.

- The project began in 2001 with locations in Edmonton, High Level and Fort McMurray and expanded in 2004 to locations in Calgary and Lethbridge. The project has registered 246 Aboriginal apprentices in over 24 different trades. To date, three apprentices have successfully completed their apprenticeship programs and have achieved an Alberta Journeyman Certificate.
- Alberta Advanced Education's Business Plan has a performance measure that measures Participation of Aboriginal Albertans in Apprenticeship. In 2004-05, 760 Aboriginal Albertans participated in apprenticeship. Participation rate targets for subsequent years have been set at: 2005-06: 990; 2006-07: 1,100; 2007-08: 1,350; and 2008-09: 1,500.

3 Draft Policy Outcomes and Actions

Building on the *A Learning Alberta* policy framework presented earlier in this paper, below is a graphic illustration of how the work of the Subcommittee flows from the vision, policy principles and policy outcomes identified in that framework. The following pages outline, in greater detail, the policy outcomes and actions that provide the foundation for the strategic advancement of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning opportunities within the advanced learning system.

Vision	Policy Principles	Policy Outcomes	Policy Actions	Frame for Implementation of Policy Actions (Short, Medium and Long Term)
Alberta leads the world in inspiring and supporting lifelong learning for all its peoples.	Quality Accessibility Affordability Diversity Collaboration	A Learner-Centered Society Vibrant Learning Communities Global and Local Leadership in a Knowledge-Driven Economy and Society Innovation and Excellence through Learning Seamless Mobility Across Alberta's Advanced Learning Opportunities	Building on Partnerships Building on Capacity in Leadership and Governance in the Advanced Learning System Community-Based Instruction Expand Alberta's Advanced Learning System to Include First Nations, Métis and Inuit Post-Secondary Institutions Faculties of Indigenous Studies First Nations, Métis and Inuit Apprenticeship and Industry Training	Short Short-medium Medium-long Short Medium Short

Vision	Policy Principles	Policy Outcomes	Policy Actions	Frame for Implementation of Policy Actions (Short, Medium and Long Term)
		Strategic Advancement of Learning Opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people	First Nations, Métis and Inuit Family Literacy Initiative	Short
			First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learner Support Services	Medium
			First Nations, Métis and Inuit Teachers	Short-medium
			Funding Support	Short, medium and long
			Indigenous Curriculum Development	Short
			Infrastructure Support for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning	Short-medium
			Learner Transitions	Short-medium
			Measure First Nations, Métis and Inuit Access and Success in Advanced Learning	Short-medium
			Preparation for Advanced Learning and Labour Market Opportunities	Long
			Provincial Centre of Excellence in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning	Long
			Public Awareness Campaign	Short

3.1 Draft Policy Outcomes

Based on its ongoing review and discussions, the Aboriginal Learning Subcommittee has proposed a set of draft outcomes to ensure the draft policy actions exhibit relevance and robustness in their ability to address the opportunities and challenges that make up the policy context. The Subcommittee indicated that it was important to articulate its own set of outcomes/measures of success while still maintaining a clear link to and recognition of the previous work of the *A Learning Alberta* Steering Committee.

A Learner-Centered Society

The learning choices and aspirations of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners are understood, respected and addressed. At the very core of Alberta's learning system is its ability to respond to the choices and aspirations by removing barriers in learning policy, programming, resource allocation and delivery that hinder access to and success in a range of opportunities from foundational to post-secondary learning. First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners are inspired by and support, learning organizations and communities. There is increased First Nations, Métis and Inuit people enrolment at and attainment of advanced learning opportunities at levels similar to the non-First Nations, Métis and Inuit population.

Vibrant Learning Communities

First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning opportunities reflect the diverse needs of communities of interest, culture, history and geography. The capacity of communities to achieve their learning potential is supported by the ongoing collaboration among and input from their learning partners – industry, governments, learning institutions (public and private) and community and cultural partners. A culturally appropriate environment helps improve First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner and teacher recruitment, retention and success in all advanced learning disciplines and institutions. A greater appreciation and understanding by all Albertans of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, their culture and language through enhanced cross-cultural relationships and partnerships is achieved. A respectful relationship, defined not by differences, but by constructive relationship-building, between First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, governments and learning institutions is also achieved.

Global and Local Leadership in a Knowledge-Driven Economy and Society

Alberta's society and its economy are attuned to both global opportunities and First Nations, Métis and Inuit people culture and language, which are driven by pursuit of knowledge, discovery and wisdom. All Albertans create

and share in this knowledge and experience and use it in innovative ways. Knowledge networks that enable learners (students, teachers, elders, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, researchers and industries) to succeed in a dynamic global and local marketplace are developed and supported. A greater number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners enter the workforce.

Innovation and Excellence through Learning
Creativity, discovery, the pursuit of learning and outstanding scholarship and research are nurtured, supported and celebrated across the diversity of Alberta's learning system and communities. A greater number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners obtain scholarships and key research positions. Technology is used effectively to support learning quality.

Seamless Mobility Across Alberta's Advanced Learning Opportunities
The roles of learning providers across a highly integrated system are clear. First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners move easily through a broad array of learning opportunities throughout a life long journey of learning. Governance structures are responsive to First Nations, Métis and Inuit people communities.

Strategic Advancement of Learning Opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people
The vision of a true learning society for Alberta and its First Nations, Métis and Inuit people is pursued with foresight, a persistent commitment and sustained strategies and investment.

3.2 Draft Policy Actions

The following proposed policy actions, developed for consideration by the Steering Committee and in turn the Government of Alberta, represent a broad range of ideas and potential strategies to meet current and future opportunities and challenges in First Nation, Métis and Inuit learning. The proposed policy actions flow from the vision, policy principles and policy outcomes developed by the *A Learning Alberta* Steering Committee and the Aboriginal Learning Subcommittee as well as input from stakeholders representing First Nations, Métis and Inuit and advanced education stakeholders.

The potential policy actions identified below have different degrees of impact on learners and other system stakeholders, as well as varying degrees of ease of implementation. Although many of the proposed policy actions fall within the jurisdiction of Alberta Advanced Education, some extend beyond Advanced Education's mandate and would require extensive collaboration with a range of stakeholders and partners (First Nation, Métis and Inuit stakeholders, the federal government, other provincial departments, learners, post-secondary institutions, industry, etc.). Furthermore, some potential policy actions represent a substantial change – a paradigm shift – in the way some programs are developed or delivered.

The Aboriginal Subcommittee supports the following policy actions and recommends governments, institutions, community, industry and all Albertans work together to implement these recommendations:

Building on Partnerships: Founded on the principles of trust, openness, respect and quality, develop a partnership framework of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and the Government of Alberta with an aim to create more access and success within the full spectrum of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people advanced learning opportunities. The partnerships will focus more on establishing the best programs with the best supports available in Alberta than on jurisdictional differences and discussions.

Expand Alberta's Advanced Learning System to Include First Nations, Métis and Inuit Post-Secondary Institutions: By contributing 3,000 to the 60,000 advanced learning spaces by 2020, in partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups, expand the Alberta advanced learning system to include First Nations, Métis and Inuit Colleges as a recognized and integral part of that system. Changes to the current and the development of new mechanisms (e.g. funding, statutes, regulations, policies and practices, etc.) will be adopted to ensure the inclusion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Colleges into Alberta's advanced learning system.

Building on Capacity in Leadership and Governance in the Advanced Learning System: In partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups, learning providers, Alberta communities and the Government of Alberta, develop initiatives and strategies that ensures that First Nations, Métis and Inuit people aspire to, participate and succeed in key decision-making positions and governance structures that make up the advanced learning system, including: the government, learning providers (e.g. Board of Governors) and communities (e.g. Community Adult Learning Councils). This includes:

- Creating a strategic-level position or area within the Department of Advanced Education whose mandate and authority it is to ensure First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner, system and resource specific solutions and strategies are implemented within the advanced learning system, institutions and government organizations. This position or area will develop its solutions and strategies based on input and recommendations from an Advisory Body, consisting of representation from First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups.
- Challenging current models of decision-making, funding and programming intended to improve First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning access and success in advanced learning opportunities.
- Developing initiatives, including leadership development programs, from existing First Nations, Métis and Inuit people governance and decision-making models and traditions.

Measure First Nations, Métis and Inuit Access and Success in Advanced Learning: Develop, implement and report on measures that track First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner access and success in advanced learning opportunities, including:

- K-12 and advanced learning participation and attainment rates;
- Graduate employment rates and income levels;
- Learner and graduate satisfaction rates;
- Number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit based schools and institutions; and
- Number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people on Boards and other leadership roles in the advanced learning system.

Public Awareness Campaign: In partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups, develop a targeted awareness campaign to current and potential First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners that both promotes the intrinsic values of participating in learning endeavours and informs these learners about the range of available learning options and related resources to gain access to and succeed in those opportunities.

Preparation for Advanced Learning and Labour Market Opportunities: In partnership with Alberta Education and Alberta Human Resources and Employment, take steps to ensure that First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth are well prepared for advanced learning and the workforce. Comprehensive information must be available and life-skills training must be taught to current and future First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners to ensure that they are well-informed about and prepared for the range of career and work opportunities. This must start with learners in the earlier grades. Because of their wealth of experience, elders must play a significant role in this process. In addition, current Alberta Advanced Education mentorship and ambassador programs will be employed as examples of mechanisms to distribute the learning and job preparation information.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Apprenticeship and Industry Training: Continue supporting programs and initiatives that focus on First Nations, Métis and Inuit people participation and completion of apprenticeship and industry training programs that respond to both province-wide and local community labour market needs.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learner Support Services: In partnership with First Nation, Métis and Inuit stakeholders, develop First Nations, Métis and Inuit-specific learner support services at advanced learning institutions with an aim to coordinate existing institution program and service initiatives, stimulate new initiatives, provide support services for current and past learners, introduce an elder presence at the institution and serve as a liaison between the university and First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

Learner Transitions: In partnership with First Nation, Métis and Inuit stakeholders and in consideration of the often non-linear path taken by many learners to complete advanced learning studies and to ensure their success in such learning opportunities, develop adaptive and flexible learner transition programs that recognize past learning and ensures smooth transition to the next stage of learning (e.g. “bundled” learning).

Infrastructure Support for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning: To ensure learning opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners take place in a safe, secure and meaningful way, provide for strategic investments in human and capital (e.g. libraries, mobile programs, mentorship programs, computers for schools, internet support, etc.) infrastructures in First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning communities.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Teachers: In partnership with First Nation, Métis and Inuit stakeholders and Alberta Education, establish a range of strategies and appropriate incentives to encourage more First Nations, Métis and Inuit people to become teachers in all subject areas, especially in math and sciences.

Provincial Centre of Excellence in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learning: In partnership with the First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups, establish a provincial centre of excellence, for use by all Alberta communities, designed specifically to address issues in and promote awareness of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning, culture and language that could leverage knowledge, experience and wisdom from existing programs and initiatives and provide an invaluable focus for research, innovation and sharing of best practices. It could become a resource for First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators, for researchers and for schools seeking advice and support in the best ways of meeting the needs of their First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners. It could explore and provide linkages to research and initiatives related to a wide range of social issues that affect First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners' success at school including adequate housing, good nutrition, strong community supports, wisdom and spirituality. And it could provide an opportunity to learn from elders about traditional ways of teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit children and youth.

Faculties of Indigenous Studies: In partnership with institutions and First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholders, develop faculties of Indigenous studies at Alberta institutions. One model to consider in the development of these faculties is the University of Alberta's Faculté Saint-Jean, which as a "community within a community", could support spiritual, cultural and learning opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners.

Community-Based Instruction: In partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, more learning opportunities available directly in the learners' home communities by leveraging existing infrastructures (e.g. distance learning, brokering, etc.) with new models and approaches.

Indigenous Curriculum Development: In partnership with First Nation, Métis and Inuit stakeholders, develop a range of strategies that ensures that teacher preparation and the development of curriculum and learning resources are based on and integrates First Nations, Métis and Inuit people culture, language and indigenous principles of curriculum development. Focus particularly on the curriculum and learning resources for programs that prepare learners to work in the communities including medicine and wellness, law, business, economic development, language and culture.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Family Literacy Initiative: In partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people stakeholder groups and community-based literacy groups, develop a First Nations, Métis and Inuit family literacy initiative that combines a focus on First Nations, Métis and Inuit language and culture with other literacy initiatives.

Funding Supports: Provide for the necessary and on-going funding supports to accomplish all the policy actions recommended in this policy document.

3.3 Additional Policy Actions

The following policy actions have been put forward by the Steering Committee's other Subcommittees: the System Transformation Subcommittee and the Foundational Learning and Diversity Subcommittee. While these policy actions do not represent the complete list of actions recommended by these subcommittees, they have been included in this paper for their degree of applicability, relevance and cross-over to the range of policy actions being considered by the Aboriginal Learning Subcommittee.

3.3.1 System Transformation Subcommittee Policy Actions

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Grant: Work with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to develop a bursary program for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Albertans (status and non-status First Nations, Métis and Inuit). The goal of this program would be to increase the number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit accessing Alberta's advanced education system and in turn reduce the educational attainment gap between Alberta's First Nations, Métis and Inuit and non-Aboriginal communities.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Ambassadors and Mentors: Consider expanding the current ambassador program to include a greater proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Albertans and investigate the potential of establishing a First Nations, Métis and Inuit mentoring program. These initiatives could be highly effective in reaching out to First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities and encourage a larger number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit to transition into and complete advanced education studies.

Allowable Resource Exemptions: Investigate increasing allowable resource exemptions used in learner financial assistance needs calculations for part-time earnings, spousal earnings and assistantships. This initiative could provide learners with additional resources to meet educational and living costs.

Apprenticeship Supports: Work with the federal government, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, industry and other stakeholders to review funding allocations, eligibility requirements and application processes to remove any financial barriers or funding gaps for apprentices.

Graduate Learner Fund: Investigate possible programs to increase opportunities for graduate learner professional development. Investment in these types of programs could work to reduce graduate learner private debt and assist graduates in career development. A funding envelope could be established to support conference participation, enhancements or expansion of graduate learners' research program, as well as increased opportunities for learning and teaching opportunities.

Interest Rate Reduction: Consider reducing the interest rate charged for Alberta Learner Loans to the prime lending rate. This would reduce current interest charges by 5% for learners with fixed repayment plans and by 2.5% for learners on floating repayment plans and could assist individuals in repayment better manage their debt burden. Ontario provides a Canadian example of a jurisdiction that has moved to reduce the interest rate on provincial learner loans (reduced to prime plus 1%).

K-12 Incentive Grant: Work with school jurisdictions and community organizations to develop a program to encourage at-risk high school learners to pursue advanced education. The grant could take the form of a tuition voucher offered through grades 10 to 12 and redeemable once the learner enters an advanced education program. Eligibility could include family income, parental educational levels and academic standing (Rutherford recipients would not be eligible). This type of policy action is intended to stimulate interest and motivation to pursue advanced education and work to increase participation and educational attainment rates. It could also improve Alberta's high school to advanced education transition rate for traditionally underrepresented groups.

Living Allowance Increases: Consider increasing learner financial assistance living allowances to better reflect actual living costs and work to develop a mechanism to annually increase living allowances. These initiatives would provide eligible learners with increased learner financial assistance to help meet rising living costs.

Loan to Grant Conversion: Investigate the potential of converting all Alberta learner loans to grants to meet learners' financial needs. While learners would continue to receive federal loans and accumulate learner debt, this type of strategy could significantly enhance debt manageability for Alberta learners.

Low Income Grant: Consider implementing a grant program to assist low income and other socio-economically disadvantaged learners access Alberta's advanced education system.

Parental Leave Interest Free Status: Work with the federal government to extend interest-free status to learners who temporarily discontinue their studies (or drop below full-time studies) for maternal or paternal responsibilities. Implementing this initiative would recognize the changing demographic characteristics of Alberta's advanced education learner population, which includes a growing proportion of learners with dependents.

Raising Awareness: Refine Alberta's awareness and planning strategies to better ensure prospective learners have the information necessary to make informed choices about program of study, credential and institution. Potential initiatives could include modifications to the ALIS website, modification to the department's Learning Clicks to include an Aboriginal learner-focused component, support to institutions to expand outreach programs and improved coordination and information sharing with high school guidance/career counselors. Strategies could also be targeted to employers and industries to raise awareness of the benefits of supporting learner scholarship funds, providing internships and co-op learning opportunities, or hiring recent graduates.

3.3.2 Foundational Learning and Diversity Subcommittee Policy Actions

Launch a Public Awareness Campaign: Develop and launch a comprehensive provincial public awareness campaign that promotes the importance of families reading and learning together, literacy and other foundations skills and the value of continuous learning.

Inspire Learning in Populations that Are Currently Under-Represented in Learning: Develop and launch specific initiatives that are culturally relevant to under-represented populations. Facilitate access to learning with local outreach, information, educational counselling and mentorships available locally through Community Adult Learning Councils, other community organizations and/or post-secondary institutions.

Enhance Financial Supports to Under-Represented groups: Examine current financial assistance mechanisms and develop specific initiatives to reach groups that are not currently participating in learning.

Increase the Responsiveness of Post-Secondary Institutions and Community Adult Learning Providers to Meet the Diverse Needs of Learners and Enhance Learner Transitions: Provide financial incentives to encourage community adult learning providers and post-secondary institutions to increase learner responsiveness and enhance transitions for learners, such as:

- increasing outreach to under-represented populations, information, advice and educational counselling, mentorships and other supports;
- reassessing entrance requirements and creating multiple entry points to the adult learning system;
- building on the work of Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers (ACAT), post-secondary institutions and the International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) to develop a framework and fund the implementation of province-wide Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) standards;
- working with community-based providers and post-secondary institutions to create clearer articulation among literacy, ESL and other foundation skills programs; and
- building on the work of the cross-ministry Learner Pathways initiative.

Create a Unit to Coordinate Literacy Initiatives: Create and resource a unit in Advanced Education responsible for coordinating adult and family literacy initiatives in Alberta and leading and monitoring the implementation of the literacy and foundational skills strategy.

Enhance Community-Based Adult and Family Literacy Programs: Increase funding to provide a broader range of literacy programs to more learners in more Alberta communities. Fund initiatives to increase awareness of available programming, specifically, funding for the Alberta Prairie Classroom on Wheels (C.O.W.) - a bus that travels to rural communities across Alberta to promote literacy and learning in families.

Invest in a Coordinated Response to Increase Literacy Skills: Form a cross-ministry working group that would work with stakeholders to develop a literacy and foundation skills action plan for Alberta. The action plan would include:

- specific targets with measures;
- adequate sustainable funding;

- outreach initiatives and new delivery approaches that address barriers to learning and social inclusion including partnerships with libraries;
- enhanced adult and family literacy programs;
- an articulated continuum of programs from volunteer tutor to small group/classroom in the community to classes in post-secondary institutions;
- an accredited training program for practitioners;
- common assessment processes and standards of learner progress;
- a visible public campaign; and
- support for research and the incorporation of research results into practice.

Appendix A

Inventory of Best Practices

Policy Discussions and Directions

Minister's 2005 Review and Forum of Alberta's Advanced Learning System: "A Learning Alberta: Framing the Challenge"

With respect to addressing the needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners, the Forum participants proposed the following:

- Adopt the recommendations set out in the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education (FNMI) Policy Framework and begin to invest resources to implement the recommendations related to post-secondary learning.
- In consultation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, build a separate framework to work through the advanced education component.
- Encourage Aboriginal leaders to get involved in post-secondary issues to help their communities recognize the value of advanced learning.
- Build capacity of Aboriginal leadership.
- Appoint Aboriginal leaders to boards of post-secondary institutions.
- Encourage institutional administrators to work with Aboriginal leaders.
- Government should commit to resolving the jurisdictional issues with respect to First Nations education, so that Aboriginals on reserve have the same access as those off reserve.

The Aboriginal Policy Framework, Strengthening Relationships — The Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework

- Endorsed by the government in September of 2000, the Aboriginal Policy Framework, Strengthening Relationships has resulted in several initiatives aimed at Aboriginal post-secondary learners.
- Through the Framework, the GOA is committed to working with Aboriginal People, federal and municipal governments, industry and other interested parties to (1) improve individual and community well-being and self-reliance and (2) clarify federal, provincial and Aboriginal roles and responsibilities.
- 2005-06 Targets and Status Report (Advanced Education and Education related initiatives only) include:
    - Increase percentage of Aboriginal Albertans aged 25-34 completing high school and post-secondary programs
    - 65 learners will progress to years 2 and 3 of Aboriginal-specific teacher preparation initiatives.
        - Advanced Education supports two Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs through the Access Growth Fund.

    - The Niipsitapi Aboriginal Teacher Education program at the University of Lethbridge (in collaboration with Red Crow Community College) began in 2003 with 12 learners admitted to regular on-campus degree program. It is anticipated that 46 learners will be participating in 2005-06.
    - The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program at the University of Alberta began in 2002. It is an off-campus elementary teacher education program designed to improve the educational success of Aboriginal children by increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers in communities in northern Alberta. A total of 47 learners are registered in the program.
- Increase Aboriginal registration in apprenticeship to 900.
    - The 12 offices of Apprenticeship and Industry Training are working with industry to encourage the hiring of Aboriginal apprentices. There are now 900 apprentices participating in 39 trades.
- With Aboriginal communities, industry, stakeholders and the federal government, implement the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project in two locations in southern Alberta.
    - Implementation of the Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project has increased the awareness of career opportunities in the trades in numerous Aboriginal communities and increased Aboriginal People' participation in apprenticeship programs. Currently there are over 200 registered apprentices participating in the program. 3 apprentices have graduated from the program.
- Initiate the establishment of two Parent Link Centres with Aboriginal focus.
- Produce second year of baseline data on off-reserve Aboriginal employment and labour force participation rates from the Aboriginal Labour Force Survey.

The "Next Generation" GOA Aboriginal Policy Initiative: Cross-Ministry Priority – Building Aboriginal Self-Sufficiency. The province is involved in discussions with the federal government and First Nations concerning:

- What is the jurisdiction of each level of government to make laws on-reserve (self-government)? Alberta has an interest in participating in and contributing to self-government discussions with the ultimate goal of assisting First Nations in improving socio-economic conditions on reserve by taking responsibility for their own governance, where appropriate. Another goal of these negotiations is to clarify roles and responsibilities between First Nations, provincial and federal governments.
- To what extent provincial laws relating to economic activities apply on-reserve and how to ensure that developments on-reserve are comprehensively regulated (regulatory gap)? For example, the Fort MacKay First Nation has proposed an oil sands development on reserve lands. The absence of a federal environmental and regulatory regime and questions about the jurisdiction of the provincial regime on-reserve creates a "gap" that results in the absence of an effective regime to regulate economic and resource development on-reserve. This uncertainty is a major factor in discouraging on-reserve development, which perpetuates the problems of unemployment and lack of opportunity on-reserve.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education (FNMI) Policy Framework

As part of Alberta Learning's commitment to the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Initiative (API), a key priority for the Ministry is to improve First Nations, Inuit and Métis learner success. In the spring of 1999, a review of the 1987 Native Education Policy was initiated. An extensive public consultation process involving over 5,000 participants laid the foundation for the development of the *First Nations, Métis and Inuit*

Education (FNMI) Policy Framework. During the consultations, a Native Education Policy Review (NEPR) Advisory Committee was established consisting of First Nations and Métis authorities, other key education stakeholders and government. In 2002, Alberta Learning released the *First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education Policy Framework*. Since the development of the Framework, the Ministry's initiatives have been guided by the five priority strategies/actions recommended by the NEPR Advisory Committee:

- Increase the quantity and quality of First Nations, Métis and Inuit curriculum, language, learning and teaching resources.
- Increase First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner access to post-secondary and other adult education and training opportunities and support services.
- Increase the number of First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers and school/institution personnel.
- Facilitate the continuous development and delivery of First Nations, Métis and Inuit courses and professional development opportunities for aspiring and existing administrators, teachers/instructors and school/institution personnel.
- Support arrangements to increase First Nations, Métis and Inuit learner enrolment in postsecondary programs of study.
- Enhance performance measurement, performance assessment and results reporting.

Alberta's Commission on Learning

Over the past two years, government has made implementing accepted recommendations in the Alberta's Commission on Learning (ACOL) Final Report a priority. Since the Commission report's release, government has contributed $551 million in support of the 87 accepted recommendations. Of these recommendations, the following are Aboriginal learner and learning related (both advanced education and education):

- Implement and provide adequate resources for the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework.
- Ensure that, when a First Nations learner who resides on a reserve attends a provincial school, he or she is funded at the same level as any other learner.
- Ensure that, where significant numbers of First Nations parents send their children to provincial schools off reserve, they have a role in the governance of those schools and the school jurisdictions responsible for the schools their children attend.
- Initiate discussions with treaty region governments and the federal government to address the governance of education for First Nations learners.

- Establish appropriate incentives to encourage more First Nations and Métis to become teachers.
- Ensure that at-risk Aboriginal children are identified early and get the support they need before they begin school.
- Take steps to ensure that First Nations and Métis youth are well prepared for post-secondary education and the workforce.
- Ensure smooth transitions for learners moving from reserve and Métis Settlement schools to other public schools.
- Establish parenting centres to make a positive link with parents and reinforce the strong parenting skills required to help their children come to school ready to learn.
- Require all schools with a significant population of First Nations and Métis learners to have well trained home-school liaison workers to assist in integrating the school into the community and developing sound communication between Aboriginal homes and schools.
- Explore and implement new governance models for schools in Métis Settlements.
- Develop and implement expanded Aboriginal language and cultural programs.
- Ensure that First Nations and Métis are directly involved in the development of curriculum and learning resources for and about Aboriginal People in all subject areas.
- Continue to provide choices for Aboriginal parents for the education of their children.
- Establish a provincial centre of excellence in Aboriginal education.

The Post-Secondary Sector Aboriginal Education and Training Action Plan, Saskatchewan Learning

This strategic plan looks at short-range (5-year) and long-range (20-year) goals for Aboriginal education at the post-secondary level in the province of Saskatchwan and identifies various means to meet these goals. The strategy framework, which also identifies the barriers that are being faced by Aboriginal Peoples in obtaining post-secondary education, is to be implemented in the next five years. The draft framework identifies the following goals, with actions and partners for each:
Work on successful kindergarten to grade 12 education for Métis and First Nations;
Prepare Métis and First Nations to participate in a “representative workforce”; and
Ensure representative Métis and First Nations workforce in the provincial economy.

Learner Support Services

University of British Columbia’s First Nations House of Learning

The First Nations House of Learning (FNHL) at the University of British Columbia seeks to coordinate all aspects of Aboriginal support. The FNHL was established in 1987 to serve as a vehicle to draw together and give greater visibility to the increasing number of Aboriginal programs that had emerged on the UBC campus. The role of the FNHL is not to serve as the academic home for any respective programs, which remain the responsibility of the appropriate faculties/departments, but to coordinate existing efforts, stimulate new initiatives, provide support services for learners and serve as a liaison between the university and Aboriginal communities. The House of Learning, as an Aboriginal focal point for the campus, has also been the centre for the development of many other supports and services for the Aboriginal learner population. These services have included childcare, the coordination of a journal and newsletter, the organizing of conferences and many other services.

The University of Alberta's Office of Native Learner Services

The University of Alberta also provides an extensive network of support services to Aboriginal learners. The Office of Native Learner Services (NSS) helps the University of Alberta provide an environment that encourages full access, participation and success for Aboriginal learners as outlined in the university's 1991 Aboriginal Learner Policy. The Retention Strategies and Services (RSS) at the university provides support services aimed at retention and improved success of all Aboriginal learners on campus. These services and programs include:

- The Aboriginal Learner Housing Program;
- A variety of support services, including peer support and personal and academic counseling;
- Scholarships and Bursaries Program, which collects and distributes an Aboriginal-based directory of scholarships and bursary information;
- Providing advocacy for Aboriginal learner concerns;
- The Wahpahtihew: Aboriginal Tutor and Role Model program;
- Coordinating study skills, one-on-one tutorials, study seminars and workshops; and
- The Community Relations Program: This program provides linkages between the Aboriginal community on campus, Aboriginal learners and off-campus relations. This program provides both substantial recruitment work and assistance in securing employment services.

The Support of Elders

The presence and wisdom of Elders have been seen as an effective way to preserve and foster traditional Aboriginal ways of knowing and provide social and cultural support for Aboriginal learners. Elders also close the generation gap created by the legacy of residential schools and strengthens the pride and kinship felt by Aboriginals. Elders are seen as vital supports and points of reference for Aboriginal society as it changes and strengthens its place within the dominant mainstream society. Elders have been used in institutions in Canada and the United States. An example of academic centerpiece of the Alaska Native Studies program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks is its Elder-in-Residence program. Prominent tradition bearers from the Aboriginal community are invited to reside on the Fairbanks campus for extended periods each semester.

Access and Transition Programs

Manitoba Access Program

Programs available for Aboriginals include the Access programs developed in Manitoba. Access programs have been as successful and innovative in Manitoba and have been copied by other areas in Canada. Since their beginning in the 1970s, the Access program has included 20 programs at several Manitoba post-secondary institutions. Access programs are offered at the University of Manitoba, Red River Community College, Keewatin Community College and Brandon University. Access programs are funded through Manitoba Education and Training, Advanced Education and Skills Training Division. Access programs sponsor university education to persons who have traditionally not had the opportunity for university education owing to social, economic, or cultural reasons or to a lack of formal basic education. Applicants are, in general, residents of Manitoba, though some exceptions have been allowed. Preference is given to Aboriginal applicants, whether Status, Non-Status, Métis, or Inuit. The various supports offered through the Access programs include:

- An extensive pre-university orientation held for learners prior to fall classes;
- Individual academic advising;
- Introduction to university courses for degree credit;
- Tutorials;
- Regular consultation with academic advisors;
- Personal support/counseling;
- Housing assistance;
- Childcare assistance;
- University/urban adjustment assistance;
- Communication and personal development workshops; and
- Career counseling.

The University of Alberta's Transition Program

The University of Alberta also offers a transition program to increase Aboriginal participation. Its Transition Year Program (TYP) is a one-year university Access program offered by the University of Alberta's Native Support Services in conjunction with nine faculties. TYP is for Aboriginal learners who may not qualify for direct entry into a specific faculty. Learners who complete this program with the required minimum Grade Point Average may qualify for admission into one of the nine faculties with a complete transfer of all credits earned.

Funding Supports for Learners

The Post-Secondary Learner Support Program

Post-secondary education in Canada is accessible to Status Indians through limited support from the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) through the Post-Secondary Education Program (PSE), which includes the Post-Secondary Learner Support Program (PSSSP), the University and College Entrance Preparation (UCEP) Program and the Indian Studies Support Program (ISSP). These programs are valid for all levels of post-secondary education, including community college diploma and certification programs, undergraduate

programs and professional degree programs such as medicine and engineering. INAC provides support to eligible Indian and Inuit learners through the PSSSP and the UCEP Program to assist Aboriginal learners with the cost of tuition fees, books, travel and living allowances. Financial aid is offered through post-secondary institutions for the development and delivery of special programs for Aboriginals through the ISSP.

Nationally, almost 100 percent of the combined PSSSP, the UCEP Program and the ISSP is delivered directly by First Nations Bands or their administering organizations. Inuit and Status Indian learners residing on or off reserve in Canada are eligible for the PSE program. Support is subject to the selection criteria defined in the respective Band Council policies. These policies vary by Aboriginal band/tribe. Prior to 1987, funding for PSE was allocated in accordance with INAC's Post-Secondary Education Assistance Program (PSEAP). Funds were available for all Aboriginal learners who aspired to pursue post-secondary studies. In 1988, the PSEAP guidelines were replaced by the PSSSP guidelines. Under PSSSP, funding for Registered/Status and Treaty First Nations was capped: restrictions were placed on learners' eligibility and daycare and rent subsidies were removed.

Government Learner Loans

- In Alberta, there are two sources for learner loans: the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta. The learner only needs to use one application. The decision to allocate funds from the two programs will be made for the learner. If eligible, learner may receive two loans, a Canada and an Alberta Learner Loan. Alberta Learner Loan funding comes from the Government of Alberta and is processed through EDULINX, Alberta's learner loan service provider. Canada Learner Loan funding comes from the federal government and is processed through the National Learner Loans Service Centre. You must pay the money back. Learners who receive Canada and Alberta Learner Loans may have multiple loans and multiple loan payments.

Canada Learner Loan Program

- The Canada Learner Loan Program was established in 1964 and is administered by the province. The loans are interest free while the learner attends a designated post-secondary institution full-time.
- To qualify for funding through the Canada Learner Loan Program, a learner must be a Canadian citizen, a Permanent Resident (Landed Immigrant), or a Protected Person including Convention Refugees, as defined by the

Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

- Learners are eligible for a maximum of $210/week of study. A typical eight-month program is 34 weeks long ($210 x 34 = $7,140).

Alberta Learner Loan Program

- This provincial program was implemented for post-secondary learners in 1969 to supplement assistance available to Alberta learners under the Canada Learner Loan Program. Loans are based on financial need. The loans are interest free while the learner attends a designated post-secondary institution full-time. Alberta Learner Loans are a financial agreement between an individual and the Government of Alberta and must be repaid within a defined period of time.
- Alberta has contracted EDULINX Canada Corporation to administer Alberta Learner Loans. The province manages the program, processes the loan applications, determines learner eligibility and provides funding.
- Maximum Lifetime Learner Loan Limits (2005-2006) are as follows:

  Undergraduate & Private Vocational School Learners: $50,000

  Dental Hygiene: $55,000

  Graduate Learners

  Masters: $60,000

  PhD: $70,000

  MBA: $60,000

  Professional Learners

  Medicine: $95,000

  Dentistry: $95,000

  Veterinary Medicine: $60,000

  Law: $70,000

  Optometry: $60,000

  Chiropractic: $60,000

  Pharmacy: $50,000

Canada Study Grants

The government of Canada provides Canada Study Grants (CSG) to learners who have permanent disabilities, high need part-time learners, women in certain doctoral studies and learner loan recipients with dependents. Unlike learner loans, Canada Study Grants do not have to be repaid. Aboriginal learners who are not eligible for Canada Learner Loans are also ineligible for Canada Study Grants, despite financial need.

Scholarships and Bursaries

According to the *2001 Scholarships, Bursaries and Awards for Aboriginal Learners* released by the INAC, there were over 400 scholarships, bursaries and awards, totaling over $2 million, available annually for Aboriginal learners. Aboriginal groups, universities, colleges, corporations, unions, churches, religious institutions, service groups and foundations offer scholarships and bursaries. Many Aboriginal learner scholarships come from the Aboriginal Youth Foundation Awards.

Alberta Aboriginal Scholarships and Bursaries

- **Alberta Blue Cross 50th Anniversary Scholarships for Aboriginal Learners:** $500 to $1,250 is given out to reward three outstanding Aboriginal learners and to encourage further studies at the post-secondary level.
- **Robert C. Carson Memorial Bursary:** Established by Alberta Justice and Attorney General and Alberta Scholarship Programs to provide financial assistance ($500) to Aboriginal learners who have successfully completed the first year of a program relating to criminal justice, criminology or law.
- **Theodore R. Campbell Scholarship:** Established by the family of Ted R. Campbell through Alberta Scholarship Programs to reward the accomplishments of an Aboriginal learner from Blue Quills First Nations College. It is valued at $1,500.
- **The Belcourt Brosseau Métis Awards:** If you are a Métis residing in Alberta and need financial help to pursue your education or upgrade your skills, a Belcourt Brosseau Métis Award will give you the opportunity to continue your education by covering a portion of your tuition costs.
- **TransAlta Aboriginal Awards Program:** TransAlta will present four educational awards (two college and two university) in 2002 to Aboriginal (status, non-status, Métis and Inuit) learners.
- **Edmonton Métis Cultural Dance Society Community Scholarships - Post Secondary:** Two $500.00 scholarships, one to a female and one to a male, is given to encourage Aboriginal single parents and children of single parent families, to further their education at the post-secondary level.
- **AlPac Aboriginal Education Partnership Program:** Aboriginal Peoples residing in Alberta-Pacific Forest Management Area for at least on year pursuing post-secondary studies leading to a recognized degree certificate or diploma. Must possess suitable attitude and be willing to participate in a partnership.
- **Robert C. Carson Memorial Bursary:** Five bursaries of $5000 are awarded to Aboriginal learners without sponsorship enrolled full-time in their second year of the Law Enforcement, Criminal Justice Diploma or Faculty of Law programs.
- **Sylvia Schulze Memorial Bursary for Alex Taylor School:** Offered through Grant McEwan Community College, Edmonton to female learner who attended Alex Taylor School in central Edmonton, with priority given to an Aboriginal learner.
- **TransCanada Aboriginal Awards Program:** Annually, seven (7) college awards of $3,500 each per year for Aboriginal Peoples to obtain undergraduate post-secondary education.
- **NAIT Aboriginal Learner Club:** One $800 scholarship is available to learners of Aboriginal Heritage who are enrolled in the second year of the Forest Technology program.

- **Syncrude Aboriginal and Women Education Awards Program:** This program grants: two awards of $2000.00 each for Aboriginal Peoples attending post secondary educational institutions in programs related to the oil sands industry (i.e. engineering, computer science, technologists etc.); two awards of $2000.00 each for Aboriginal Peoples attending post secondary educational institutions pursuing studies in the Finance/Accounting/Business disciplines; and two awards of $2000.00 each for women attending post secondary institutions pursuing a degree in Science & Technology.
- **Grant MacEwan College Foundation:** Aboriginal business Leadership Award grants 4 awards of $1,500 each.
- **Imperial Oil Cold Lake Aboriginal Education Awards Program – Alberta:** Imperial Oil's Cold Lake operation offers a one-time educational award of $1,000 to individuals of local native ancestry. The award is designed to assist a learner in his/her first or second year of post-secondary education towards a career in the petroleum industry.
- **Aboriginal Health Bursary Program – Alberta:** This partnership program, with Alberta Health and Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund, awards up to $13,000 for Aboriginal learners to pursue post-secondary education in Alberta.
- **Alberta Energy Company Limited, Native Scholarship Award:** Awards 5 scholarships of $3,500 to people enrolled oil and gas industry programs at an accredited technical school, college or university
- **Weyerhaeuser Canada Scholarships – Alberta:** A $1,000 scholarship is offered to a person of Native ancestry, who is from the Peace Country and Grande Cache, Alberta and is furthering his/her education in Commerce, Engineering or Forestry.
- **Alberta Law Foundation Scholarship - University of Lethbridge:** One annual award of $5,000 is available to an Aboriginal learner entering first year at the Faculty of Law on the basis of academic standing.
- **Undergraduate Awards for Native American Learners:** There are several Undergraduate scholarship opportunities for learners of Native American descent at the University of Lethbridge.
- **Native Foundation Trust Bursary - Grande Prairie Native Friendship Centre:** For Grade Prairie high school learners entering an arts, science or business program at a recognized educational institute.
- **Senator James Gladstone Memorial Scholarship - Alberta Indian Investment Corp.:** A maximum of $1000 is awarded to recognize excellence and achievement by a Treaty Indian and to encourage and assist Treaty Indians in the pursuit of post-secondary education in the area of business, finance or economics.
- **Aboriginal Business Leadership Awards:** A minimum of 4 awards of $1,500 is available to self-employed Aboriginal learners and 2nd or mature Aboriginal learners who are attending a public post-secondary educational institution in Alberta and enrolled in a program leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree in a business or commerce.

Teaching Models and Learning Cultures

Aboriginal Curriculum Development

Aboriginal control of curriculum is an instrumental factor in changing the role of Aboriginal communities to become shapers of their own academic knowledge. By fostering Aboriginal control of curriculum development, Aboriginal Peoples are encouraged to take more participatory roles at all levels of the post-

secondary system. Aboriginal control of curriculum development has long been a primary goal of Aboriginal educators. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) makes the point that where Aboriginals have exercised control of education, there has been a markedly higher success rate. Throughout the report, RCAP recommends increased Aboriginal control of curriculum development. Curriculum development in Canada is supported through institutions like the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, the Gabriel Dumont Institute and the University of Northern British Columbia, as well as other institutions across Canada.

Language and Literacy

According to the 1996 Census, one-quarter of Canada's Aboriginal population reported having had an Aboriginal language as their mother tongue. Through efforts to support and develop Aboriginal languages, as well as English and French literacy, post-secondary education is offering relevant and necessary education for Aboriginal Peoples. This development is seen as still weak but represents a move away from the assimilative practices that had often served to weaken the learning of traditional Aboriginal languages. Researchers argue that a key to strengthening Aboriginal education is the development of strong language and literacy skills. The teaching of Aboriginal languages and literacy is seen as a key way to develop Aboriginal participation in the education system. More formal support is needed to develop the organizational and curricular infrastructure required at all levels of the education systems in Canada in order to facilitate the development of stronger language and literacy skills.

University of Alberta School of Native Studies

Establishing an academic unit focusing on Native Studies had been discussed within the University of Alberta since 1972, when such a unit was proposed in a University Senate Committee meeting by representatives of the Indian Association of Alberta. In 1978, 20 recommendations were made to the University Senate by their task force regarding improved service to Native people and a more coherent involvement in Native Studies. In that year, University of Alberta GFC established a Standing Committee on Native Studies consisting of University of Alberta faculty members and learners and representatives of the Native community at large.

After several years of research, discussion and consultation with interested individuals and groups from inside and outside the University, the Committee on Native Studies opted for an ambitious program of Native Studies. The Committee on Native Studies proposed the establishment of a School of

Native Studies that would be multidisciplinary in character, instead of a small department that would confine itself to Native history, language and culture. The School would offer a wide range of courses leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree in Native Studies, as well as minor concentrations for learners in other Faculties. Faculty members and learners would engage in research with special attention to language and land use.

Though not parochial in its outlook on Native Studies, the School would pay particular attention to Native peoples—Indian, Inuit and Métis of the Canadian West and North. The establishment of a School of Native Studies and a Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies were approved by GFC and the Board of Governors of the University in Spring 1984. In the same year, the Universities Coordinating Council also approved the School and the degree. In 1988, the GFC and the Government of Alberta approved a program of study leading to the Bachelor of Arts in Native Studies. The School of Native Studies is an academic unit concerned primarily with teaching and research. As such, it is separate administratively and functionally from the Office of Native Learner Services.

Two distinct yet related themes underlie the School's Program of Studies. The first theme is respect for indigenous knowledge systems, including languages, cultures and philosophies. The second theme is the University's emphasis on research excellence. Together, the themes focus on the School's developing a research capability to address issues affecting Indian, Inuit and Métis people today. In this context, the learners' program of study centres on developing knowledge and analytical and research skills suited to address problems of current Native interest. The objective is to provide learners with interdisciplinary academic experience that is integrative. Land, language and self-government are among the most vital issues identified by Native communities in the Canadian West and North. These issues and the emphasis on research of the University and the Native communities have shaped course development. At the same time, Native communities are dynamic and the School intends to respond to these changes and to developments in the broader Canadian society. Degree programs offered at the School of Native Studies are as follows:

- Bachelor of Arts (Native Studies) Honors;
- Bachelor of Arts (Native Studies) After Degree;
- Bachelor of Arts (Native Studies)/Bachelor of Education Combined Degree Program;
- Bachelor of Science (Environmental Conservation Sciences)/Bachelor of Arts; and
- (Native Studies) Combined Degree Program

The Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP)

The Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program (BUNTEP) is a community-based program offering training in the field of education. This program presents an alternative to traditional campus-based teacher training. By offering the program in Aboriginal or remote communities, BUNTEP contributes to both the educational and economic development of northern and rural Manitoba communities.

Brandon University also offers the Program for the Education of Native Teachers (PENT). This community-based teacher education program from the Faculty of Education combines work in community schools with courses from Brandon University. Learners are allowed to complete distance education during the winter. The program also offers 50 months of internship interspersed throughout the program.

Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP)

Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) was formed with a small group of BC Aboriginal teachers in 1969. The community-delivered teacher education program has been offered through the University of British Columbia since 1974. NITEP learners begin their studies in a field-centre setting in Kamloops, Chilliwack, Duncan, or Vancouver, British Columbia. Coordinators are available in each centre to counsel the learners in professional and academic development, to facilitate school experiences, to teach and to arrange for local resource people and activities. Learners also participate in seminars to prepare for school experiences in public and band schools. Aboriginal studies courses that explore political, social and economic issues from historical and contemporary perspectives are included. Aboriginal education policies, curricula and schooling are also examined. Courses allow learners to adapt, develop and evaluate Aboriginal studies curricula.

First and second-year learners make orientation visits to the University of British Columbia. Many learners attend summer session on campus following their first and second years in NITEP. Seminars are held throughout the on-campus years to explore resources available to UBC learners, discuss issues as Aboriginal educators and build relationships with NITEP learner colleagues.

The key to NITEP's success has been community delivery, which allows learners to remain in their home communities to study at field centres for the first two years of the program. Support centres at the University of British Columbia and at the field centres have also helped learners overcome course-related and personal difficulties.

The Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) and the Northern Professional Access College (NORPAC)

NORTEP/NORPAC is another teacher education program that primarily targets people of Indian and Métis ancestry for selection, both Status and Non-Status. NORTEP/NORPAC classes are offered in cooperation with, the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina. NORTEP/NORPAC is overseen by a Board of Governors that consists of 17 elected northern officials representing the NORTEP Council Inc., the Prince Albert Grand Council, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Creighton and Île-à-la-Crosse School Divisions.

Similar to NITEP, NORTEP offers a bachelor of education program through community delivery. NORTEP is an off-campus bachelor of education program in which learners alternate two-week periods of university classes with one

week of classroom experience. Graduates qualify for a Professional A Teaching Certificate. Learners receive a NORTEP/NORPAC Learner Allowance during the northern-based phase of their program and textbooks, tuition fees and transportation are provided.

Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP)

SUNTEP is a program administered through the Gabriel Dumont Institute that offers teacher education training through the University of Saskatchewan. It is similar to the NITEP and NORTEP programs. For the first two years of their studies, SUNTEP learners attend classes at a SUNTEP location. The final two years include a four-month internship and may include class work at one of the university campuses. SUNTEP is offered in three locations: Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon. Also offered is the two-year Métis Teacher Associate Program. This certificate program is based upon a foundation similar to that of SUNTEP with strong professional, academic and practicum components. The program is designed to be delivered on-site in Métis communities. Between 1980 and 1990, SUNTEP graduated 370 learners, 80% of whom were female.

Aboriginal Programs (Faculty of Education, University of Alberta)

With three treaty areas and 11 different Aboriginal languages within the Province of Alberta, the Faculty of Education recognizes the importance of offering community and campus-based educational programs that respond to the growing needs of Aboriginal communities. They offer the following specializations:

- **The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (ATEP)** - An off-campus undergraduate teacher education program (completion/full) designed to affect the educational success of Aboriginal youth by increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers in communities throughout Alberta.
- **The Indigenous peoples Graduate Education Program** - Three-year PhD program that prepares graduates for administrative and faculty positions in colleges, schools and universities.
- **Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI)** - A summer institute offered to both undergraduate and graduate learners interested in learning an Indigenous language and/or gaining expertise in the area of linguistics, language and literacy, curriculum development, second language teaching and research.

Aboriginal-Geared Programs

Many of the larger post-secondary institutions in Canada have been able to offer specific programs at the undergraduate or graduate levels that are designed and coordinated to meet the specific needs and interests of Aboriginal learners, but are offered at mainstream institutions. These programs have been developed to further broaden the range of services to Aboriginal Peoples, to diversify the skills and knowledge of the Aboriginal community and to create a more equitable distribution of Aboriginal Peoples across subjects. The University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta are two examples of institutions that have successfully done this.

Indigenous Legal Studies at the University of Alberta and the First Nations Legal Studies Program at the University of British Columbia

Both the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta offer programs that are designed to increase Aboriginal involvement and knowledge in legal studies. In both the University of British Columbia's First Nations Legal Studies program and the University of Alberta's Indigenous Legal Studies program,

Aboriginal learners take the same required courses and are evaluated and graduate on the same basis as the non-Aboriginal learners in the school. Both programs permit the law schools to consider factors other than LSAT and university marks in making decisions about Aboriginal Peoples' admissions. This is done in recognition of the need to have a greater representation of Aboriginal Peoples in law school and in the legal profession and the need to consider cultural bias and educational obstacles that some Aboriginal learners may have encountered. The University of Alberta's program is funded by the Alberta Law Foundation that advises prospective learners on admission procedures and criteria, offers academic counselling for learners enrolled in the LL.B. program and provides career and employment counselling.

The Ts`ˇkel Graduate Studies Program at the University of British Columbia

The Ts`ˇkel Graduate Studies Program was designed to prepare Aboriginal Peoples for the field of educational administration. Since then, Ts`ˇkel Graduate Studies has expanded to include educational studies, curriculum and instruction and educational psychology and special education. Regular UBC graduate admission requirements apply.

Learners in the program are:

- Provided with a seminar in which they can develop their own interpretations and applications to educational research related to Aboriginal education;
- Provided with a simulation course that addresses issues related to administering a First Nations Band School;
- Provided with opportunities for a field experience in either an Aboriginal or a public education setting;
- Provided with Ts`ˇkel Graduate Studies faculty support for major papers, theses, or dissertations, in collaboration with other faculty advisors;
- Provided with First Nations House of Learning facilities, learner services and library services; and
- Able to interact with all learners and faculty in respective departments and both contribute to and benefit from the wide variety of backgrounds and interests that this provides.

First Nations Forestry at the University of British Columbia

The First Nations Strategy was developed in response to the growing realization that the Faculty of Forestry of the University of British Columbia must become an active participant and leader in increasing the knowledge and understanding of First Nations and Aboriginal rights as they pertain to forest

resource management. This strategy was adopted in 2001. To facilitate this strategy, the Forestry Faculty developed a First Nations Forestry Initiative, as well as introduced course content dealing specifically with Aboriginal forestry issues. The initiative has outlined the goals of opening up the existing curriculum for more study of Aboriginal forestry issues, creating strategic links with Aboriginal communities and actively seeking ways to recruit from the Aboriginal community.

First Nations Partnership Program

The First Nations Partnership program was developed in response to a request from a group of First Nations communities in central Canada represented by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. In 1989, this council sought child-care training for community members that would be delivered in their own communities and that would incorporate and ensure the continuity of their own cultural practices, values, language and spirituality. It had rejected mainstream programs of training because they did not address these two requirements: namely, community-based delivery and cultural representation throughout the training. Through the partnership between the University of Victoria and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, an innovative model for ensuring the cultural representation of communities was developed. Using this model, the training program has been delivered with eight First Nations organizations to date.

Aboriginal Colleges

Semi-Independent or Independent Aboriginal Educational Institutions

While the development of funding programs to assist in Aboriginal access to post-secondary education has been instrumental in increasing Aboriginal success rates over the past decades, the creation and development of educational institutions specifically for Aboriginal education has been seen as an equally important step. While the size, level of autonomy and Aboriginal content and design differ, all the following institutions have been seen as key initiatives in the strengthening of Aboriginal communities.

First Nations University of Canada

The largest and best-known of Canadian semi-independent post-secondary institutions is the First Nations University of Canada (FNUC), controlled by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and accredited as a member of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. FNUC has more than 1,500 Aboriginal learners from First Nations across Canada. FNUC offers bachelor programs that include language studies, education, communication, fine arts, Aboriginal studies and business. All FNUC courses are provincially accredited through a federation agreement with the University of Regina, Saskatchewan. In 1995, FNUC, in partnership with the Business College of the University of Saskatchewan, launched the first Aboriginal MBA program in Canada. FNUC offers Master of Arts programs in English, Linguistics, Indigenous Studies and Aboriginal Social Work and Indian studies through the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, University of Regina.

The mission of FNUC is to enhance the quality of life and to preserve, protect and interpret the history, language, culture and artistic heritage of First Nations. The college aims to acquire and expand its base of knowledge and understanding in the best interest of First Nations by providing opportunities for bilingual and bicultural education under the mandate and control of the First Nations of Saskatchewan. Learner services offered at the college include academic counselling, Elder services, scholarships, bursaries, awards

and tutoring services.

The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research

The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research (GDI) is the educational arm of the Métis Nation — Saskatchewan. The institute is the only Métis owned and operated educational institution of its kind in Canada. Its mandate is:

- The promotion, renewal and development of Métis culture through appropriate research activities and curriculum development. Through the GDI, Saskatchewan Métis are trained with the required skills to make the goal of Métis self-government a future reality. Other goals of the institute include establishing a Native cultural institute controlled by Native people to conduct research, produce curricula and develop language training programs; to design, develop and implement teacher and other training models; and to design and develop innovative methods of revitalizing and strengthening Native culture;
- To conduct research of an historical and contemporary nature, toward the development of a factual record of native history and culture. All research is to be conducted through an independent GDI research unit;
- To disseminate cultural–historical and contemporary information by utilizing modern communication methods, by developing curricula for use throughout the entire education system, by training teachers to use the new Native Studies and by "popularizing" Native Studies for use in both Native and non-Native communities.

The GDI is funded by grants from the province of Saskatchewan and the federal government. The GDI serves nearly 1,000 learners every year and also oversees the Dumont Technical Institute, which is associated with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST).

Other Aboriginal Institutions

Many other Aboriginal institutions operate in Canada, but without the level of financial support of the Gabriel Dumont Institute and the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. These institutions, while smaller in scope, often operate through partnerships with larger colleges or universities. This type of institution, for example the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a (the Nisga'a House of Wisdom) in British Columbia, often crosses the conventional boundaries of universities, colleges and technical institutes by offering a wide range of courses. It has, for example, developed partnerships with the University of Northern British Columbia, Northwest Community College and the Open Learning Agency. Its

bilingual, bicultural studies are wide ranging and include training for forest rangers/technicians, fishery technicians, biologists and scientists and training in hospitality and tourism, social services, trades and financial planning. Cultural services include Nisga'a language, contemporary Nisga'a arts and Nisga'a religious studies. One example of a smaller and more locally focused Aboriginal education institution serving primarily the members of a tribal council or a regional area is the Yellowhead Tribal Council in Alberta, which offers preparatory and university programs to its local community. Many of these smaller schools rely on small program grants that are short-term, project-specific and may be subject to change. The provincial governments generally do not support smaller institutions, although they may provide learner financial assistance to learners if they are in departmentally approved training programs offered by such institutions.

Community Delivery

Community delivery has been a crucial initiative in the development of Aboriginal education. European-based education's focus on the needs and geographic convenience of mainstream, non-Aboriginal learners has largely resulted in the establishment of post-secondary institutions in urban centres. Traditionally, for Aboriginals who sought to gain post-secondary education, the process of moving to a centre of learning also meant leaving behind their Aboriginal community. This has been especially true for Aboriginals on reserves.

This situation has been altered by the creation of community-based programs that allow Aboriginal learners to complete some or all of their post-secondary education programs in their home community. Many residents of northern and remote communities are unable to attend a university campus, largely because of location and lack of financial resources and educational preparedness. Community-based programs attempt to eliminate much of the financial and social hardships brought about by long-term resettlement to a university campus. These programs have been especially important in allowing Aboriginal access to post-secondary education-training programs in remote geographic areas. Some examples of successful programs incorporating community delivery are detailed below.

Alberta-North

Support to Alberta-North is a partnership of institutions that share goals of increasing and improving access to educational opportunities and services and improving the success rate of adult learners in northern Alberta. Founded in 1994, Alberta-North maintains a network of 49 Community Access Points (CAPS) in northern Alberta, in partnership with Aurora College, Northwest Territories, which hosts 26 CAP sites. These CAP sites allow over 1,700 registrants per year in small and isolated communities across Northern Alberta to receive courses, programs and educational services by providing access to a facility, educational technology and a telecommunications network. A significant number of learners are Aboriginal.

Source Documents

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- *Fundamentals of Adult Education: Adult Education in First Nations Communities: Starting with people (Chapter 18)* by Deo Poonwassie, University of Manitoba, March 2001.
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[1] The Institute of Indigenous Government (IIG) is Canada's first autonomous, degree-granting Indigenous-controlled, public post-secondary institution